

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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TAGS: PINT, IS
SUBJECT: SHIFTS IN PRESIDENCY, KNESSET AND ILP

SUMMARY: IN A SERIES OF UNRELATED BUT SIMULTANEOUS DEVELOPMENTS, PRESIDENT KATZIR ANNOUNCED HIS INTENTION TO STEP DOWN FROM THE PRESIDENCY, MK HAIM ZADOK RESIGNED FROM THE KNESSET, AND FOUR MEMBERS OF THE ILP LEADERSHIP MOVED TO THE LIKUD. KATZIR'S REASONS WERE PERSONAL, BUT ZADOK'S RESIGNATION AND THE ILP MEMBERS' MOVE ARE SEEN AS DELAYED FALLOUT FROM THE LAST ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY

1. PRESIDENT EPHRAIM KATZIR, IN A FORMAL COMMUNICATION TO PRIME MINISTER BEGIN AND KNESSET SPEAKER SHAMIR, DECLARED HIS INTENTION TO STEP DOWN FROM THE PRESIDENCY AT THE END OF HIS TERM IN MAY. HIS DECISION NOT TO RUN AGAIN AFTER ONE TERM IN OFFICE IS UNPRECEDENTED, BUT CONFORMS TO THE PLEDGE HE MADE ON ASCENDING TO THE POST. HE IS SAID TO HAVE BEEN PROMPTED BY PURELY PERSONAL REASONS-- HE YEARNS TO RETURN TO HIS LABORATORY IN REHOVOTH-- AND NO POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE IS BEING READ INTO HIS DECISION.

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2. ALTHOUGH HE WAS ELECTED IN 1973 WITH THE BACKING OF THE LABOR PARTY (HERUT AND THE LIBERALS HAD BACKED PROF. EPHRAIM ORBACH), KATZIR HAS CLOSE PERSONAL TIES WITH BEGIN. IT HAS BEEN WIDELY NOTED THAT BEGIN'S FREQUENT CONSULTATIONS WITH THE PRESIDENT IS TYPICAL OF HIS STRICT ADHERENCE TO PROTOCOL AND HAVE ADDED PRESTIGE TO THE PRESIDENCY AS AN INSTITUTION. BEGIN IS KNOWN

TO HAVE UNSUCCESSFULLY URGED KATZIR TO RECONSIDER HIS DECISION.

3. THE KNESSET MUST ELECT A NEW PRESIDENT BETWEEN 30 AND 90 DAYS BEFORE THE END OF THE CURRENT TERM AND IT IS A FAIR ASSUMPTION THAT THE LIKUD CHOICE--WITH COALITION SUPPORT--WILL BE ELECTED. IMMEDIATE SPECULATION CENTERS AROUND FORMER KM AND CABINET MINISTER ELIMELECH RIMALT, ONE OF THE FEW SENIOR STATESMEN IN THE RANKS OF THE LIKUD (HE'S A FORMER HEAD OF THE LIBERAL PARTY). OTHER NAMES BEING BRUITED FROM THE POST INCLUDE: SUPREME COURT JUSTICE ELIAHU MANNY (A CONTENDER IN 1973), MINISTER JOSEPH BURG, MAPAM PATRIARCH, YA'AKOV HAZAN, AND LABOR MK YITZHAK NAVON. MAARIV SUGGESTS THAT BEGIN WILL WNAT TO NAME A MEMBER OF THE ORIENTAL COMMUNITY, POSSIBLY MK SHMUEL TOLEDANO (DMC).

4. IN AN APPARENTLY UNRELATED DEVELOPMENT, NAIM ZADOK TNEREDERED HIS RESIGNATION TO THE KNESSET, ALSO OFFERING PERSONAL REASONS. ZADOK, A FORMER CABINET MINISTER AND ACTIVIST CHAIRMAN OF THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE COMMITTEE, HAS BEEN FRUSTRATED BY HIS REDUCED ROLE AS JUST ONE MORE MEMBER OF THE OPPOSITION. HE IS NOT SATISFIED OR STIMULATED, HE SAYS, AND IS EAGER TO RETURN TO HIS WELL-ESTABLISHED AND PROSPEROUS LAW LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PRACTICE. HIS SEAT WILL BE TAKEN BY IMIR RON OF MAPAM, WHO IS NEST ON THE ALIGNMENT LIST. RON, FORMER HEAD OF THE MAPAM AFFILIATED KIBBUTZ MOVEMENT, IS A WELL-KNOWN DOVE AND IS LIKELY TO BECOME ONE OF THE MORE ACTIVE OPPOSITION MKS.

5. COMMENT: ZADOK'S MOTIVES WERE PERSONAL AND DID NOT STEM FROM INTRA-PARTY DIFFERENCES. HOWEVER, HIS RESIGNATION SHARPLY REFLECTS THE DEPRESSED STATE OF MANY IN THE LABOR PARTY, AND IS EXPRESSIVE OF THE INABILITY OF MANY OF THE LABOR CHIEFTAINS TO FIND SATISFYING AND EFFECTIVE ROLES WITHIN THE OPPOSITION CONTEXT. WHILE THE INABILITY OF THE ALIGNMENT TO BECOME AN EFFECTIVE OPPOSITION UNDOUBTEDLY CONTRIBUTED TO HIS FRUSTRATION, ZADOK'S MOVE IS MORE SPECIFICALLY A PRODUCT OF THE PERVASIVE PERSONAL FRUSTRATION AFFECTING MOST OF THE LABOR LEADERSHIP. END COMMENT

6. FOUR MEMBERS OF THE ILP EXECUTIVE ANNOUNCED THEIR RESIGNATIONS TO JOIN THE LIBERAL PARTY. THE ILP, DECIMATED IN THE LAST ELECTIONS, HAS FOR MONTHS BEEN PREOCCUPIED WITH THE QUESTION OF DISSOLUTION

OR REALIGNMENT. ITS INDECISION AND LACK OF DIRECTION HAS BECOME THE LONGEST RUNNING JOKE ON THE ISRAELI POLITICAL SCENE.) SOME IN THE PARTY FAVOR JOINING THE DMC AND OTHERS THE LIKUD OR LABOR, WHILE PARTY BOSS MOSHE KOL FAVORS CONTINUED INDEPENDENT EXISTENCE. THE PARTY'S ONLY MK, GIDION HAUSNER, YESTERDAY AGAIN RECOMMENDED JOINING THE COALITION, A MOVE WHICH WAS OVERRULED BY KOL'S FACTION FOLLOWING THE ELECTIONS.

7. COMMENT: TREMORS FROM THE EARTHQUAKE--THE FAVORITE ISRAELI METAPHOR FOR THE ELECTIONS--ARE STILL JARRING THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE. THE ZADOK DECISION AND THE ILP GROPING REFLECT THE CONTINUING INABILITY OF THE FORMER PARTIES IN POWER TO DEVELOP INTO AN EFFECTIVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND COHESIVE OPPOSITION.
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Message Attributes

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